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ABSTRACT

Based on findings that high-quality early care and education, youth development programs for after-school and summer hours, child abuse and neglect prevention, and intervention programs can help to prevent violence crime, this document presents a violence prevention plan for the schools and youth of Pennsylvania. Four actions are proposed to reduce school and youth violence: (1) assure all children access in the earliest years to quality early care and education programs proven to reduce crime; (2) assure all school-age children and teens access to after-school, weekend, and summer youth development programs to shut down the "prime time for juvenile crime"; (3) help schools identify troubled and disruptive children at an early age, and provide children and their parents with the counseling and training that can help kids get back on track; and (4) prevent child abuse and neglect by offering high-risk parents in-home parenting-coaching and making sure that child protection, foster care, and adoption services have policies and sufficient well-trained staff to protect and heal abused and neglected children. The report concludes by urging the Commonwealth's public officials to invest in the components of the four-part plan to reduce crime and violence. (KB)

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From Pennsylvania's Front Line against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania

April 2002

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *Pennsylvania*

From Pennsylvania's Front Line Against Crime:

A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

As a statewide organization of Police Chiefs, Sheriffs, District Attorneys and Victims of Violence, we are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But anyone who thinks that jailing a criminal undoes the agony crime leaves in its wake hasn't seen crime up close.

Pennsylvania's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than the proven programs that help kids get the right start in life. These program areas are quality early care and education (birth through five years), youth development programs for the after-school and summer hours, child abuse and neglect prevention, and interventions proven to help get troubled kids back on track.

In 2000, 48,211 violent crimes were reported to Pennsylvania police departments, an average of 132 per day. Yet today, inadequate state and federal investments in proven crime prevention strategies put thousands of children at needless risk of becoming delinquent or violent teens and adult criminals, leaving every Pennsylvanian at needless risk of becoming a victim.

State law enforcement organizations support this Plan:

- ✓ **Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association**
- ✓ **Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association**
- ✓ **Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association**

Dozens of national and other state law enforcement and victim assistance organizations across the country have adopted similiar resolutions supporting the components of the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan.

We urge the Commonwealth's public officials to invest in the components of this four-part plan to dramatically reduce crime and violence by helping Pennsylvania's young people become good neighbors and responsible adults. While no plan can prevent every violent act, this common-sense approach, based on our experience and the latest research about what really works to fight crime, can make all of us safer.

Four Actions to Reduce School and Youth Violence

- ☛ Assure all children access in the earliest years to **quality early care and education programs** proven to reduce crime.
- ☛ Assure all school-age children and teens access to **after-school, weekend and summer youth development programs** to shut down the "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime".
- ☛ Help schools identify troubled and disruptive children at an early age, and provide children and their parents with the **counseling and training that can help kids get back on track**.
- ☛ **Prevent child abuse and neglect** by: a) Offering high-risk parents in-home parenting-coaching; and b) making sure child protection, foster care and adoption services have policies and enough well-trained staff to protect and heal abused and neglected children.

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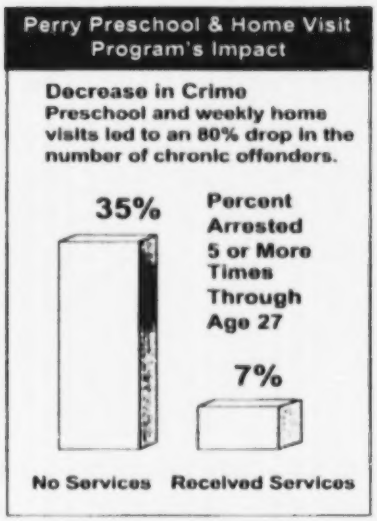
☞ Assure all children access in the earliest years to quality early care and education programs proven to reduce crime.

Rigorous studies, hard experience and brain development research tell the same story: In the first few years of life, children's intellects and emotions, and even their ability to feel concern for others—the root of "conscience"—are being permanently shaped. When parents are at work trying to make ends meet, programs that provide nurturing, stimulating early care for babies and toddlers and quality preschool experiences not only prepare children to succeed in school, but also dramatically reduce crime. For example:


Perry Preschool & Home Visit Program's Impact
Decrease in Crime
Preschool and weekly home visits led to an 80% drop in the number of chronic offenders.
35%
Percent Arrested 5 or More Times Through Age 27
7%
No Services
Received Services

- In Ypsilanti, Michigan, three- and four-year-olds from low income families randomly assigned to be in the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's preschool program were ***only one-fifth as likely to be chronic lawbreakers by age 27***, compared to similar children not offered this school readiness child care.
- In Syracuse, at-risk infants and toddlers enrolled in a quality child development program, with parenting support for their mothers, were ***only one-tenth as likely*** as similar children to be delinquent ten years later.
- Chicago's government-funded Child-Parent Centers have served almost 100,000 three- and four-year-olds since 1967. New research tracked for 14 years 989 of those children and 550 similar children not in the program. ***The children who did not participate were 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.***

About 66% of Pennsylvania's more than 884,000 children under age 6 have both parents or their only single parent in the workforce. Pennsylvania is one of only nine states that does not fund preschool programs or supplement the federal Head Start program. When struggling parents are forced to leave their children in inadequate early care and education programs, we all pay a terrible price.

"Back-end-only, wait-for-the-crime-so-we-can-throw-away-the-key approaches can't bring back Darryl or any other murder victim. We need to fight crime not just after the fact, but also before people are killed."

— **Genell and Pete Cozart**, Farrell (Mercer County)
Son Darryl was murdered on March 1, 1997

☞ Help schools identify troubled and disruptive children at an early age, and provide children and their parents with the counseling and training that can help kids get back on track.

When children are disruptive and troubled, it is a warning signal that it is time to start looking for causes, and to provide the proven social skills training, counseling or other help for the children and their families that can lead the children back to a healthier path. For example:

- A Montreal study showed that providing disruptive first- and second-grade boys with services like these ***cut in half*** the odds that they would later be in special classes, rated highly disruptive by a teacher or by peers, or required to repeat a grade in school—all signs that the risk of future violence has been sharply reduced.
- Five years after randomly-selected, disruptive, low-achieving seventh-graders completed a three-year program involving behavioral therapy and rewards, they were only ***one-third as likely to have a juvenile record as those who did not receive these services.***

"To prevent future crime and make Pennsylvanians safer, we need to invest in our childrens' needs today."

— **Chief Robert W. McNeilly, Jr.**, Pittsburgh Bureau of Police

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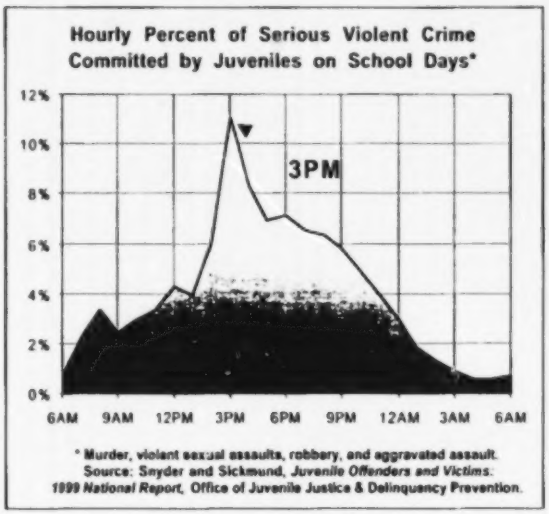
☞ Assure all school-age children and teens access to after-school, weekend and summer youth development programs to shut down the "Prime Time for Juvenile Crime".

In the hour after the school bell rings, turning thousands of children and teens out on the street with neither constructive activities nor adult supervision, violent juvenile crime soars and ***prime time for juvenile crime begins. On school days, the peak hours for such crime are from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. These are also the hours when kids are most likely to become victims of crime.*** They are the peak hours for teen sex, and being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that 8th-graders will smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs.

Quality youth development programs can cut crime immediately and transform this prime time for juvenile crime into hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. They protect both kids and adults from becoming victims of crime, and cut teen pregnancy, smoking, and drug use, while they help youngsters develop the values and skills they need to become contributing citizens. For example:



- Five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs were compared to five getting new clubs. At the beginning, drug use and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the ***projects without the programs had 50% more vandalism and scored 33% worse on drug use***.
- High school freshmen were randomly selected from welfare families to participate in the Quantum Opportunities four-year, after-school and graduation incentive program. Six years later, compared to those who got the program, ***boys left out averaged six times more criminal convictions***, and girls and boys left out were nearly four times more likely to be without a high school degree.
- Young people given a Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentor were ***half as likely to begin illegal drug use and nearly one-third less likely to hit someone***, compared to applicants randomly assigned to a waiting list.

☛ Prevent child abuse and neglect by: a) Offering high-risk parents in-home parenting-coaching; and b) making sure child protection, foster care and adoption services have policies and enough well-trained staff to protect and heal abused and neglected children.

Being abused or neglected multiplies the risk that a child will grow up to be violent. In Pennsylvania, 22,809 children were reported abused or neglected in 2000. Child protection and foster care services in Pennsylvania lack adequate resources to protect children and to see that those who have been maltreated receive the services they need to help them heal. We must also act *before* abuse takes place by expanding the programs proven to reduce childhood abuse and neglect, prevent subsequent delinquency and improve other outcomes for children. For example:

> ***"To make Pennsylvania safe, we must be as willing to guarantee our children access to quality school readiness and after-school programs as we are to guarantee a criminal room and board in a prison cell."***
>
> – **Sheriff Robert B. Wollyung,** Franklin County
> 2001-2002 President, Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association

- The Nurse Family Partnership randomly assigned half of a group of at-risk mothers to receive visits by specially-trained nurses who provided coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support. Rigorous studies show the program not only ***reduced child abuse by 80%*** in the first two years, but that fifteen years after the services ended, ***these mothers had only one-third as many arrests***, and ***their children were only half as likely to be delinquent***.

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"We need to invest in Pennsylvania's most vulnerable kids so they'll never become America's Most Wanted Adults. School readiness child care and after-school programs are among the most powerful weapons to reduce crime and violence. These programs really work to help families and communities teach kids the values and skills to become good citizens instead of criminals."

— **Chief Paul D. Rager**, Manheim Township Police Department (Lancaster County)
2001-2002 President of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association

The Bottom Line: Investing in Kids Saves Lives and Money

When America fails to invest in its children and youth, we pay far more later in lost lives, increased fear and tax dollars. Pennsylvania's treasury will actually have ***more*** money to dedicate to other uses a few years from now if we invest ***today*** in programs to help kids get the right start in life. For example:

- Economist Steven Barnett found that the High/Scope Foundation's Perry Preschool program ***saved $150,000 per participant in crime costs alone***. Even after subtracting the interest that could have been earned by investing the program's funding in financial markets, the project produced a ***net savings of $7.16***—including more than six dollars in crime savings—for every dollar invested.
- Barnett estimated that the cost, including increased crime and welfare costs, of ***failing*** to provide at least two years of quality educational child care to low-income children is approximately $100,000 per child.
- A study by Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country would ***save $1.7 million***.
- A Rand Corporation report showed that, even without counting the savings to crime victims and society, the resulting ***savings to government*** alone from effective early childhood programs ***exceeds by two to four times the cost of the programs***.

"The most successful prosecutions can never undo the agony inflicted on crime victims. That is why Pennsylvania must invest in the programs proven to help kids get the right start so they never become criminals."

— **The Honorable Lynne M. Abraham**
Philadelphia District Attorney

- In a George Mason University poll, 86 percent of police chiefs nationwide said, "expanding after-school and child care programs like Head Start will greatly reduce youth crime and violence." Nine out of ten chiefs agreed with the statement, "If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay for more later in crime, welfare and other costs".

For citations of studies referred to above, visit www.fightcrime.org

FIGHT CRIME INVEST IN KIDS
PENNSYLVANIA

Launched in 2001, FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *PENNSYLVANIA* is a bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization made up of over 100 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and victims of violence. It is a project of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS, a national, nonprofit organization made up of over 1,600 law enforcement officials and crime survivors, joined by leading criminologists and child development experts.

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